



Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Committee,

The challenges my family and I faced due to distance learning were numerous. From the very start, my children; ages 11, 9 and 3 were affected negatively. Being away from friends and out of the school environment caused stress on my oldest son who had made a lot of friends and was very active in sports and clubs in his school. He also struggles with ADHD. After a few weeks he became weary which made staying at home very challenging for us all. The curriculum and paperwork given to us from their school seemed very difficult without the face-to-face instruction from their teachers. We were not prepared for the shift and this made more stress for our family.

Financially, our income decreased because I had to stay with the children throughout the day. My husband's income decreased because of the pandemic and stay-at-home orders for businesses and churches. My husband is a Pastor and he runs a small construction business as well. Both of which brought little to no income in during the months of April-November. We depleted our savings and needed to request help from the state and bank loans to help us through. This also caused much stress on our family.

Many of the families in our community struggled with lay-offs, low unemployment checks and the stress of having children who were home for distance learning. Through a partnership with the United Way of Central Minnesota, we rented space through Atonement Lutheran Church to create socially-distanced learning pods for our children. This allowed parents to go to jobs or job search and leave their kids in a safe environment while being supported with their distance learning. Once the word got out, our numbers continued to grow. Although we had to turn some families away due to being short on volunteer staff and space, we are happy to be able to help families.

The United Way of Central Minnesota was able to secure funding to support some rent and modest support to those working with our youth. They connected us with training to better support students, to the district to access hot spots and other supports, and provide access to food. This approach of collective impact is making a huge difference in our community and with our families.

We are still desperately trying to recover from all the challenges due to this pandemic. The difficulties we faced and yet to face because of distance learning are yet to be seen. We pray for the resilience and protection of our kids daily.



I am grateful for the Opportunity to partner with United Way of Central Minnesota – Partner for Student Success. I support Senate File 707 because it will help more families like mine and the families I am helping to serve.

Tiffany Daniels
St. Cloud

February 22, 2021

Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Education Finance and Policy Committee

I was part of a small team of Rotarians who joined with United Way of Olmsted County in 2017 to address one of the real gaps in our community. One that could only be solved by total community involvement and one that if resourced, would have a large and lasting impact. One that would change individual lives, families and improve the health of our entire community. After a year of study, based on much data, analysis and interviews we selected education.

We were surprised to see large gaps in education outcomes. Is it acceptable for only 32% of our black children to be proficient in reading by 3rd grade? Is it acceptable for 20% of Hispanic children to fail to graduate from high school on time? No!

We also learned about the long-term social impacts of low achievement. Increased incarceration rates, decreased health, increased risky behaviors and lower economic achievement. We decided this was an initiative well worth our time and effort as community members.

Cradle 2 Career emerged as our platform based on the StriveTogether national framework and Collective Impact model. We gathered 25 community leaders from across all spectrums, built a complete plan for moving forward, with specific outcome targets, defined a structure, gained support from faith groups, philanthropy, local government, and education partners from early childhood through higher ed. Then we raised funds to hire staff and got started.

We now have a Leadership Table of 25 community leaders, staff skilled in facilitation, data and community outreach, and we have two (of our seven) collaborative action networks which are community-led teams currently working on Kindergarten Readiness and High School Graduation.



Please be proud of the investments you have already made and can make in the future. We WILL improve student achievement and capability, we will lower social costs, we will improve people's lives and increase economic viability for so many individuals and families. We must address educational gaps in Minnesota and what we have learned is that schools must be supported by communities for that to happen. Please support Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill.

In gratitude for your partnership,

Elaine Case
Retired, IBM Executive
507.254.2465
elainecase1@gmail.com
www.linkedin.com/in/elainecase

Since I was a freshman in high school, I have been a part of Northfield Promise's TORCH program. This program has helped me be able to visit colleges. I never thought that I would be interested because I do not come from a family that can afford it, but being in TORCH has helped me see that it is possible to go to college. Whether it is us going in person to visit schools that I am interested in or researching about them online, TORCH has helped me see a future after high school. When I turned 15 years old I wanted to get my permit. The classes are too expensive for my family, and so I thought I would not be able to do it. I talked to a TORCH staff member and they said that there was a way for me to get a scholarship and I could attend the classes to get my permit. Thankfully now I have my license and am able to help my family get around. There have also been times where I have had personal problems at school and TORCH has helped me feel safe. TORCH also offers snacks to students and I have found this very helpful. There have been times where I was not able to afford eating, but I knew that when I got to TORCH I would be able to have a snack. Also having homework help has been very beneficial to me and my fellow students. I am the type of student that gets too anxious to ask a teacher for help. TORCH has helped me with my homework and also helped me gain confidence in asking for help from my teachers. Since I was able to get my grades at a better place I was able to do PSEO classes with TORCH. These free college classes have helped me find out what I want to do after high school. I am really grateful that I can take them for free. This way I can see if college is something I want to do. After taking a few classes these past two years I have found out that I really like English and psychology classes. There also have been moments where mentally I have not been okay. TORCH has not just been my support system; they have also been there for me while I was getting the help I needed. TORCH helped me to find someone I could talk to about my problems. After I met my therapist, I got so much better mentally. That was all thanks to TORCH. I think that I am so fortunate to have been able to be a part of such an



amazing program. Now I am a senior, and even saying that to myself I cannot believe it. I truly never knew that I would get to where I am. The reason that I think I was able to get here is with the support and help of TORCH and the staff there. Please support Senate File 707 so Northfield Promise's TORCH program can continue to help more students like me.

Litzy Conde Acosta
Grade 12

Chair Chamberlain and Member of the Education Finance and Policy Committee,

My family has been a part of the NAZ community for nine years. My husband and I are both members of the Parent Advisory Board (PAB), which helps guide NAZ parent leadership, build advocacy skills together, share perspectives on what's working for our family. I have testified before at the State Capitol about lawmakers continuing to making families and education a priority. This year I am a proud fellow of a 6 month Parent Data Education program where I am learning how data can be useful to me as a parent advocating for my community and family. My family and community thank you for your past input in keeping families with ongoing wrap around care with the Education Partnership Coalition and with NAZ, and ask that you continue to use your position to help transform ours. Please support Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill. Thank you!

Dominique Mays





Beth Sherden
942 Vegas Lane NW
Rochester, MN 55901
507.358.3975
Bethsherden@gmail.com

February 22, 2021

Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Education Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota State Legislature
3225 Minnesota Senate Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Education Finance and Policy Committee:

As the recently retired executive director of the Children's Museum of Rochester (DBA Spark), I am writing to you today in support of our Rochester Cradle 2 Career organization and its importance to our community.

Our organizations direct involvement in this initiative has been in the network to work to achieve kindergarten readiness for children in our community. As the data from our local district shows, less than a third of our community's children enter kindergarten with the widely held skill expectations that yield academic and social success. Cradle to Career is a unique organization that brings together the public and private groups in our community to address the root causes factors of why so few of our children are getting the developmental opportunities to succeed. More importantly, by creating a systematic approach that brings these partners together and align our resources and programs to shared results.

Without this backbone to create collective impact, organizations would retreat back to their siloed delivery of services, minimizing results achieved and the potential to widen the inequity divide.

With support of Cradle 2 Career, our community can indeed improve our systems, reduce inequity, and improve partner organizations efficiencies to achieve excellence for our early learners and pave the way for their future success and success of our community.

In closing, I am asking for your support of Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Beth Sherden
Retired Executive Director of Children's Museum of Rochester



February 21, 2021

To: Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Education Finance and Policy Committee

Thank you for the consideration of this letter, as I am excited to write in support of Senate File 707. In 2017, I was fortunate to be on a small team of Rotarians in Rochester investigating education gaps in our community. We spent a year meeting with different community leaders and non-profit groups attempting to identify how we could best use our resources and time to support literacy. It was clear that we had many committed and passionate individuals supporting these efforts in Rochester. After our time connecting with what was already happening in Rochester, we served as facilitator to bring together 25 community leaders to what eventually evolved into Cradle 2 Career, from the StriveTogether national framework. With the MN legislation's support, this community work has grown to include leadership from multiple sectors of our city and population, a governance structure, and ambitious goals with established metrics.

With the efforts of Cradle 2 Career, I am proud of what education is moving towards in Rochester. As the parent of two young children at the beginning of their formal education, there is nowhere else I would want to raise them and I am excited, with your continued support and investment in Minnesota children, to see how our educational gaps improve in our community.

McKinsey Goodenberger
Genetic Counselor, Mayo Clinic
320-237-2697
mckinseygoodenberger@gmail.com

Chair Chamberlain and Member of the Education Finance and Policy Committee,

My name is Angelina Courtney, and I am a North Minneapolis resident and am a part of the Northside Achievement zone in North Minneapolis.

I graduated from Hennepin Technical College with an Associate in Applied Science degree in Network Administration. When I'm not helping an end user with a technical issue, or working on routers, switches, servers, and computers, I am spending time with my 4 children and bonus child-cat: Laisha (14), Christian (10), Leah (5), Ervin (3), and Selina the cat.



We enjoy going on road trips, baking cookies, taking walks on the nature trails nearby, reading, doing puzzles, and building computers.

Being a Florida native with Jamaican heritage I regularly teach my children the importance of learning about their ancestral history, and instill the importance of advocacy, assertion, and education. Being a first generation American it is important to lay a solid foundation for my children to launch from and become successful in their adult lives. The Education Partnership Coalition and Northside Achievement Zone provide wrap around support for many families like mine. Please support Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill. Thank you!

Chair Chamberlain and Member of the Education Finance and Policy Committee,

My name is Arriel Mays and I attend Ascension Academy, a partner school with Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis Minnesota. I love NAZ for everything they do for my family and other families in my community. I really want to thank NAZ for the technology they provided me and my sister so we can continue distance learning. The Education Partnership Coalition is important in this effort. Please support Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill. Thank you!

Arriel Mays
Student

Greetings Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Education Finance and Policy Committee,

My name is Mary Nguyen and I am so parent in the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (SPPN) I write to you in support of Senate File 707. As a parent partner, I have witnessed SPPN brace together the cross-sector collaboration necessary to transform inefficient and fragmented systems into ones that seamlessly work towards the benefit of futures generations. As an parent who is overwhelmed with the responsibilities of working and managing a family in a world full uncertainty, I can sleep better at night knowing that SPPN can be a trustworthy source of support for 1) guiding vision and strategy, 2) supporting aligned activities, 3) establishing shared measurement practices, 4) building public will, 5) advancing policy, and 6) mobilizing funding.

Please support Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Mary Nguyen



Northfield Promise's TORCH program stands for Tackling Obstacles and Raising College Hopes, and everything that it stands for it is completely true. I say this because TORCH has helped me tackle difficult times in my life, and helps me push through those heaving doors that get slammed on me. The staff members always have open arms to greet you no matter what skin color you have or what religion you believe in. I feel like I am improving everyday ay because I have them right by my side. I have gone through many difficult times in my life, from my dad going to jail to my mom being arrested by ICE. Deportation is something that is real and was a big issue in our small town. My parents have fought more than 20 years for their citizenship. They continue to fight because all they want is to be here to work and feed themselves and continue on with their lives and give me and my siblings a better education. In Mexico there is no such thing as an opportunity to go to a camp or join a lacrosse team or play an instrument. With TORCH I've gotten the opportunity to do all of these activities. My parents work minimum wage jobs, and that money just covers the rent - we all have a side job cleaning the church to pay the rest of the bills. Many kids in TORCH can say that they have been through rough patches, but TORCH is like a big Band-Aid because it helps you heal, and it helps you get back on your feet and continue and not stay stuck. It keeps you on the right track. The homework help that TORCH does is amazing. It helps us get so many things done, from math to social studies to science. I don't know how many times this program has given my siblings and I scholarships to join a school activity. Without them I wouldn't have the biggest opportunity that I've had, to participate in camps that are not in my parents budget, and having fun memorable moments that are very important to a kid. A camp that I will never forget is Camp Pepin. It was when I was younger and I went with my little sister. My mom didn't have the money for us to go but we met a lady from TORCH named Susan Sanderson, and she and TORCH gave us the opportunity to go. She took us to the camp and it was the first time my sister and I had done anything like that, and we had the best time. We got away from our worries of bills piling up and fights because of the stress of those bills and we got to be just kids for once. I've also gotten the opportunity to go to Camp Menogyn, which is very pricey and would never be in my parents budget. I got to go with a scholarship from TORCH, and this camp helped me so much to have a stronger mind and better confidence in myself, and made me feel like I had the ability to continue with my life, even with all the problems I've been through. These opportunities that TORCH has given me and many others are really truly life changing. Everything the TORCH staff members do, from motivation to not judging to giving good advice, are things a young teen needs. TORCH has provided me with so much. Please help them continue, and thank you so much for all the help you provide to change young people and teen's lives.

Citlali Valdez
Grade 12



Chair Chamberlain and Member of the Education Finance and Policy Committee,

Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood is important to me because of the work with parents through the Parent Council and the opportunities my students are provided through partnerships such as Stem Freedom School and others. Through working with the Parent Council I was able to grow my advocacy skills, network, and job prospects. The work with all of the EPC partners to do the same for parents throughout the state is an example of a 2-generation approach to learning. We know that parents are the first teacher and SPPN and the EPC understand that is key to working towards closing our education gap.

Please support Senate File 707 and invest in Minnesota children and families by passing this bill. Thank you!

Erica Valliant - SPPN Parent